

Growing Pains

Story: Growing Pains

Storylink: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/7986058/1/>

Category: Lion King

Genre: Adventure/Romance

Author: ThatPersonYouMightKnow

Authorlink: <https://www.fanfiction.net/u/3365186/>

Last updated: 04/06/2012

Words: 11280

Rating: T

Status: Complete

Content: Chapter 1 to 7 of 7 chapters

Source: FanFiction.net

Summary: Simba finds some red fur on his head, and concludes that he must be growing up. But then it doesn't stop...

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: Mystery of the Red Fur

AN: Did I say *days*? I meant a *day*. Yeah. Sorry about that. Surprised? I bet you are. So, here's the opening story of Series Three, which is... rather interesting, to say the least. Enjoy...

Growing Pains

Chapter One: Mystery of the Red Fur

"This can't be happening," Simba muttered as he paced back and forth, a simply astounded look in his auburn eyes.

"This can't be happening, this can't be happening, this can't be happening..."

"Let me guess," said Nala, smiling as she watched him panic. "Is the next sentence 'This can't be happening'?"

"This can't be happening," Simba repeated, as if he wasn't even paying any attention to her, far too focused on the problem he had on his paws.

"Well, what do you know?" Nala grinned. "I was right! Thank you, Simba, for proving that I'm psychic!"

"Nala, this is serious!" Simba exclaimed, almost tearing his fur out he was so scared. "How is this happening to me? It can't be! It makes no sense! It defies logic itself! And I've never even *used* those words in a single sentence before!"

"Simba, just calm down," Nala instructed in a soft tone. "Push all the worry out of your mind. There's nothing to be scared about."

"Yes, there is!" Simba insisted. "I can prove it to you!"

"How?" Nala asked, a doubtful expression on her face. What was happening to Simba was surprising, yes, but not on the level that he was making it out to be. "How can you prove it, Simba?"

"I mean, just *look* at it!" Simba pointed to the top of his head. Normally, the most prominent thing would be the golden-brown tuft of fur. But this evening, a thick strand of red fur dominated his head. The first signs that Simba was growing a mane. A very thick mane, by the looks of things. "Who looks at that and thinks it's not scary?"

"Uh, *me*," replied Nala, rolling her eyes. "I don't see what's got you so worked up. You're just... starting to grow a mane, that's all. What's wrong with that?"

Simba raised an eyebrow at her. "*Now*? You really think I should be growing a mane by *now*? I'm less than a year old, Nala! I have at least fifty years before this is supposed to happen!"

"Exaggerating a bit, aren't you?" said Nala, raising her eyebrows.

"All right, then – forty-nine years," Simba corrected himself. "But the point still stands! This literally *can't* be happening to me. I'm way too young to start growing a mane!"

"What makes you so sure of that?" Nala asked. "How do *you* know that all cubs don't start growing their manes at your age?"

Simba shrugged. "I don't know."

"Well, ask!" Nala told him. "Ask your Dad. He'd know, wouldn't he?"

"Oh, come on, do you really want to get my Dad involved in this?" said Simba, looking a little hesitant. "I'll probably get about two hundred rules about what not to do when growing your mane."

"You won't get an answer otherwise," Nala retorted, giving him a smile. "And you'll spend your whole life wondering about it..."

Simba stared at her for a few moments, and then sighed, giving in. "Oh, all right," he grumbled, before walking outside of the den. "I'll be back in a minute."

Looking out over the Pride Lands, he could see that the sun had very nearly set. Ten more minutes and the whole kingdom would be engulfed by the night. It had been a busy day for Simba, and it wasn't over yet.

He'd only just come back from one of the hardest battles of his life – to his surprise, it was with a cub. But this was a very determined, troubled cub, who went by the name of Tama. Luckily, she had a change of heart, and Simba's life was spared, much to his delight. Then she'd run off with her new boyfriend, Tojo, and that was the end of that. A happy ending.

Until, of course, Simba discovered that he was showing the beginnings of a mane. And that's when things got complicated again. Tama was bad enough, but now he had to solve the mystery of why he was growing up? Did the Great Kings of the Past up in the stars ever give him a break?

Simba found his father, King Mufasa, perched on the edge of Pride Rock, staring down at his kingdom below. Queen Sarabi, his mate, stood right next to him, her head resting against his.

"Dad!" Simba called, heading over to him. "I've got a problem over here!"

Mufasa turned to his son, immediately noticing his concerned expression. "Simba, why do you look so worried?"

"Look!" Simba pointed to the strand of red fur dangling from the top of his head. "I should have this yet – should I?"

Mufasa stared at the strand of red fur, and a frown spread across his face. He exchanged a concerned glance with Sarabi, before speaking to his son. "No," he confirmed.

Simba grinned. "I knew it!" he exclaimed, almost hopping triumphantly. "I knew it, I knew it, I knew it!"

"That's very odd," Sarabi agreed. "Especially for your age, Simba. This shouldn't happen for quite a while."

"So I was right," Simba declared, smiling. "This is wrong. This shouldn't happen, right? I bet it's probably just a bit of dead grass or something. Probably nothing to worry about." Simba gave the strand of red fur a little tug, but it stayed in place. "Huh? What gives?" He let go of the strand of fur, and shrugged. "Oh, well. You can fix this, though, can't you, Dad?"

Mufasa and Sarabi shared worried glances with each other. "Son, you can't exactly *fix* what's happening to you," his father told him.

Simba's face fell, and his heart sank. "What?" he said, a worried expression on his face. "Why?"

"It's just part of growing up," Sarabi explained. "It's just... happened a little early for you, that's all. Some people are late bloomers, and well... you're an early bloomer. It's a sudden growth spurt." She nuzzled her mate's face. "Our little Prince is finally growing up."

"Yes," Mufasa agreed, nuzzling Sarabi back. "Soon you'll have a lot more red fur, Simba, and before you know it, you'll have a mane as big as mine. You might even look exactly the same as me."

Simba's eyes widened in horror. *Oh, no. I don't want to look like my Dad. Please say that won't happen.*

"It won't be long before he's running the kingdom," said Sarabi, smiling down at her son. He was finally growing up. It was happening a little early – well, actually it was happening *very* early – but that didn't matter. He was finally maturing into adulthood.

And Simba hated every bit of it.

Chapter 2: Chapter 2: Avoiding Growing Up

Chapter Two: Avoiding Growing Up

Nala watched Simba as he walked back into the den. He was staring down at the ground, a glum look on his face. He walked right past her, like she wasn't even there.

"Simba?" Nala called, watching in shock as he blatantly ignored her existence. "Did you ask them?"

Simba sat down, facing away from Nala. "Yeah," he replied. "I asked them."

"Well, what did they say?" Nala asked, expecting that Simba was just showing the first signs of growing up. What else could it be? What other cause was there? There wasn't one. He was maturing into an adult – it was as simple as that.

"They said I'm growing up," Simba told her, confirming Nala's suspicion. She was right. "They did say that it was a bit early for me, but then they just told me that I'm an 'early bloomer'. It'll only be a matter of time before I have one big mane covering my entire face."

"You look... sad," Nala noticed, studying his glum expression. It was like he didn't want this. It was like he wanted things to be like they were before all this. It was like he didn't want to grow up.

"Well done." Simba clapped his front paws together. "You've just won the Obvious Award. What was your first clue?"

"I don't understand," said Nala, rising to her paws and walking over to him, a puzzled expression on her face. "I thought you *wanted* to grow up? You always used to say when we first met that you just couldn't wait to be King."

"Yeah – that was then and this is now," he replied, his frown widening. Nala could have sworn she saw tears in his eyes. "I don't know. I guess as I got a little older I... didn't want it to end. I wanted to... I wanted to *stay* young." He looked into her eyes, tears streaming down his cheeks. "I don't want to grow up, Nala. I like how tall I am, I like how I sound... and I like my tuft. I want it back."

"Well... it's still there," said Nala, brushing the thick strand of red fur on top of his head back, revealing what remained of his golden-brown tuft – what Simba considered to be the cutest part of his body. "Sort of."

"But I don't want it to be 'sort of there!'" Simba snapped, anger evident in his eyes. "I want it *all* there! Stupid red fur! I want it gone!" Suddenly, his eyes lit up, and a grin spread across his face. "That's it! I'll just pull it off!"

Nala stared at him, a concerned look on her face. "Uh, Simba, I don't think you should—"

"I know what I'm doing," Simba declared, before grabbing hold of the strand of red fur and tugging on it with all his might. His face twisted and contorted in pain, as he strained to pull the fur out. "I'm... getting... there..."

"Simba, you're going to pull your *head* off if you keep doing that!" Nala exclaimed, unable to believe he was actually doing this. "Stop it!"

"Everything's under control," Simba assured her, as he pulled even harder on the red fur, grunting at the strain it caused him.

Eventually, a ripping sound was heard, and Simba successfully removed the red hair from his head. He laughed triumphantly. "Ha-ha-ha!" he exclaimed, grinning. "Take *that*, puberty!" He threw the red fur to the floor. "And Prince Simba is back to normal! Well, what do you think, Nala? How do I look?"

"Uh... I don't know how to tell you this, Simba, but..." Nala pointed with a claw to the top of his head. "I think you should just look."

Simba looked upwards, and could see an identical strand of red fur dangling from the top of his head. "*What?*" he exclaimed, his eyes widening in shock, unable to believe this was happening. "How... How did it...?" Simba stared at the red fur on the floor, and then at the fur on top of his head. "This can *not* be happening to me!"

"It just... grew back," said Nala, amazed. "Wow... I didn't know that's what lions did when they grow up!"

"Are you enjoying this?" Simba asked, glaring at her.

"No, no." Nala shook her head. "Sorry. It's just... kinda surprising, that's all."

"It's not supposed to grow back!" Simba stated, feeling the red fur to see if it was actually real. It was. "I'm not a worm! You don't see me growing a new head when it gets cut off!"

Nala giggled. Simba frowned at her. "It's not funny."

She stopped giggling. "Sorry." She stared at him, and then started giggling again. "It is a bit funny."

"I don't believe this!" Simba was nearly shaking with rage. "It's like my body *wants* me to grow up! It's not giving me any choice! No fair!"

"That's kind of the point, Simba," Nala told him. "Everyone grows up eventually. It just happened to you a little early, that's all. Is that really such a problem?"

"Yes, Nala, it is!" Simba replied, angry with her for acting like this wasn't a problem at all. "To *me*, it is! I don't know about you, though! And another thing..." Simba pointed at her accusingly with a claw. "Why aren't *you* growing up?"

Nala's eyes widened. "Huh?" she said. "Just what is that supposed to mean?"

"You heard me," Simba responded. "Why aren't you growing up? How old are you, Nala?"

"Just under a year," Nala answered.

Simba's eyes widened in horror. "Oh... you've gotta be kidding me," he said, shocked.

"What is it?" Nala asked.

"You're *older* than me," he told her. "So I'm growing up... but you aren't. I'm starting to grow a mane, but you aren't growing... anything."

"Lionesses don't grow manes, Simba," Nala informed him.

"I know, but you would have grown a little in *height*," Simba said, looking her over. "Nope. You don't look any taller. So how come I'm the only one who's growing up around here? And you're older than me! This isn't making any sense!"

Nala shrugged. "Maybe I'm a late bloomer? Either that or lions grow up faster than lionesses."

"Oh, I don't know," Simba collapsed onto his back, sighing deeply. "Maybe I should just go to sleep and figure this out in the morning. There has to be something I can do to stop myself from growing up."

"Well, pulling out your fur isn't going to help," Nala pointed out. "It just keeps growing back. Which is strange in itself, actually."

"I'll figure something out," Simba assured her. "Just watch me." He closed his eyes, ready to go to sleep. "Goodnight, Nala."

Nala glanced outside, and saw that it was night. *I guess I'm feeling a bit tired, too*, she thought, opening her mouth wide and letting out a big yawn.

She snuggled up next to Simba, closing her eyes. "Goodnight, Simba."

Simba slowly drifted off to sleep, unaware of the horrifying surprise that awaited him the next morning...

AN: Ooh... what's going to happen to Simba? Leave your astounded reviews using that button at the bottom of the screen. It's there to help you. If not, then just come back tomorrow for some more, yeah?

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: Emotions Are Running High

AN: Simba's about to get a big surprise when he wakes up. But what is it?

Chapter Three: Emotions Are Running High

Nala was woken up the next morning by the sound of someone loudly snoring in their sleep. It sounded like it was coming from inside the den, but Nala had never heard anything like it. *Who's making all that racket?* she asked herself, as she rolled over onto her stomach, her eyes closed, trying to get back to sleep.

The snoring continued. "Aw, come on!" Nala exclaimed, opening her eyes and turning her head to the side. "I've never heard anyone snore like that before! Someone must have had a really rough—"

Nala's eyes widened in horror, and she let out a loud gasp at what she saw. It was something so horrible, so terrifying, that she knew she was going to have nightmares about it for the rest of her life...

A lion lay next to her. A big teenage lion, who was growing a small red mane on the top of his head. His eyes were closed, and he was snoring loudly. What horrified Nala the most was that he had his big paw around her, and was hugging her close to him.

Nala's mouth opened wide and she let out a loud scream, wriggling away from this complete stranger. This had to be the most scariest thing she had ever seen in her entire life!

In fact, Nala screamed so loudly that she woke the lion up. He jumped up, his auburn eyes wide open, looking around frantically. "What's going on?" he asked, in a noticeably deep voice. "What's going on?"

Nala continued to scream. The lion took one look at Nala screaming, and then he started to scream too!

They just screamed and screamed at each other for what seemed like for ever. And finally, shaking with fear, Nala pointed at him with a claw. "Who... Who are you, you... *sicko!*"

The lion narrowed his eyes at her. "Nala, what are you screaming about? You scared me to death!" His eyes then widened. "Hey... what happened to my voice? And..." He inspected his body, and his large paws. "What happened to my *body?*"

"Who are you?" Nala demanded, taking a step towards him, a furious look on her face. "I've known some creeps in my life, but you have to be the lowest of the low, attempting to sleep with a cub like me! I'm not even half your age!" She extended her claws, growling. "I should rip you apart right now. Who knows what you would have done if I hadn't woken up..."

"What are you talking about, Nala?" the lion asked. "You started screaming and woke me—"

"How do you know my name?" Nala interrupted. "I've never seen you before in my life! Have you been stalking me – is that what this is about? Well, I'll have you know that I've already got a boyfriend. But I bet you know that, don't you?" She looked around the den, and shook her head. "Nope. No Simba. You've kidnapped him so you could have me all to yourself, haven't you?"

"Nala, it's me!" the lion insisted, taking a step towards her. "I'm Simba!"

"Yeah, well you would say that!" Nala retorted. "You expect me to believe that a tiny cub like Simba – who I happen to be *older* than, I'll have you know – suddenly became a big teenager like you! That's so stupid it makes me want to laugh! Actually, no, it makes me want to throw up! How can you be so disgusting?"

"Come on, Nala! You can see it's me! I went to sleep right next to you last night! I was complaining about how I didn't want to grow up, and... Wait a minute, I've grown up even more!" He felt the small mane on top of his head with his large paws. "I've got even *more* red fur! This is getting ridiculous! And my voice has changed! I sound like a whiny, depressed idiot! Is *this* who I'm gonna be when I grow up?"

Nala just watched him with wide eyes. *He really is crazy*, she thought. *He actually thinks he's Simba. This is just insane on every level. Simba's, like, three times as small as him!*

"That's it!" Nala exclaimed, walking away. "I'm getting out of here, and I'm going to find where you're keeping Simba prisoner!"

"Wait!" the lion cried, hopping in front of Nala, blocking her escape. "Nala, it's me! I really mean it!"

"Look, Mr Psycho, you're never gonna get me to believe in a million years that you're..." Nala trailed off as she stared into the lion's auburn eyes, recognising them instantly. Only one person in the world had eyes like that... "Simba?"

Simba smiled. "That's right. It's me."

"Oh, Simba!" Nala cried, throwing her paws around him – although she had a bit of trouble, considering his significantly larger size. "What's happened to you?"

"I don't know," Simba replied. "I just woke up this morning looking like this. With all this fur and... this really stupid voice. I don't know what's going on any more."

"You seem to have grown up," Nala noticed, looking him over. "I guess this is what you'll look like when you're a teenager."

"This isn't right," he said, looking around the den. "Something's wrong. This shouldn't be happening yet. Okay, the little bit of red fur, I can deal with that... but *this*?" He pointed to his small mane. "This is just impossible for my age!"

"I've gotta admit, it's pretty strange," Nala agreed, scratching her head. "Too strange for me to figure out."

Simba sat down on the ground and sighed sadly. "I don't know what to do either. It makes no sense."

"I wonder how your Mom and Dad are gonna react," said Nala.

"They'll probably be *happy* about it," Simba replied. "They don't care about me. They just want me to grow up and rule the kingdom so they can do whatever they want all day. I've never met more selfish people."

"You are so becoming a teenager," said Nala, smiling at him. "Your emotions are running high. According to my Mom, that happens a lot."

"Yeah, but it's true," Simba insisted. "My parents don't care one bit about—"

Suddenly, Simba was grabbed by the throat and pinned to the ground, finding himself staring into the eyes of Mufasa, his own father. He didn't look happy. "Who are you?" he demanded, burning with rage.

"D-dad," Simba stammered as his father choked him. "It's... me... Simba..."

"Don't lie to me," Mufasa snarled, tightening his grip on Simba's throat. "It'll be the worst thing you can do."

Simba choked and gagged for air. *I've been choked twice in less than twenty-four hours*, he thought. "Please..." Simba begged. "It's really... me..."

Mufasa just tightened his grip even more, determined to kill this intruder before he caused any damage to the pride.

Simba could only stare into his father's angry eyes as he slowly choked to death, knowing there was no hope for him now...

***Chapter 4*: Chapter 4: Older and Older and Older**

Chapter Four: Older and Older and Older

"He's telling the truth!" Nala cried, as King Mufasa continued to choke his own son to death. "That's Simba! You've gotta believe me!"

"She's... right..." Simba rasped, as his eyelids began to feel heavy. He felt like he was going to fall asleep for ever...

Reluctantly, Mufasa took his paws from Simba's throat, getting off of him. "I want to know what is going on right now. How can this be Simba?" he asked Nala. "He looks nothing like him."

"Appearances can be deceiving," Simba muttered, rubbing the part of his throat his father had grabbed him by. It felt sore, but he'd be okay. "Dad, something's happened to me. I woke up this morning looking like a teenager. I mean, I thought the little bit of red fur on my head was enough, but this is ridiculous!"

"You mean to say that you've suddenly grown up overnight?" Mufasa raised an eyebrow at his son. This all sounded very illogical... "Somehow, Simba – if that is your real name – I find that very hard to believe."

"Dad, you *have* to believe me," Simba insisted, a desperate look in his eyes. "I know it's hard, but you've just gotta! It's me. Always has been, always will be. Man, I hate this voice..."

"We just have to figure out what caused it," said Nala, as she stood next to Simba. "How did he get from a small, cute cub to a big teenager? There has to be some explanation for it. These kind of things just don't happen randomly. Or *do* they?" Nala shot a look towards Mufasa. "When did you grow up?"

"A long time ago," Mufasa replied, looking his son over, unable to believe that this was happening. "Nowhere near Simba's age. I assumed it was just a growth spurt at first... but now I'm not so sure. Generally, lions and lionesses in the Pride Lands take quite a while to grow up. Oddly enough, it's the only pride around with a problem like that."

"Weird," said Nala, scratching her head.

"So it's not a growth spurt either," Simba said. "This is something else. Something's causing me to grow up *too* fast. I've heard about how life is short, but this is just stupid!"

"I'm afraid to say that I have no idea what's wrong with you, Simba," Mufasa told his son, an apologetic look on his face. "I've never seen anything like it before. This is all new to me."

Simba sighed, hanging his head low. "So there's nothing you can do."

Mufasa put a paw on Simba's shoulder. "I'm sorry, son." With that, he turned around and left the den.

"I don't believe it!" Simba exclaimed, as he watched his father leave. "How can he just leave like that? Doesn't he even *care* about me?" He slid to the ground, burying his face in his paws. "What did I tell you? Selfish."

Nala smiled at Simba, and ruffled the mane on top of his head. "Come on, Simba. You can't just sit there looking sadder than an elephant with only three legs. You've got to do something about it!"

Simba looked up. "Like what?" he asked. "There's no way I can stop this. I'm just growing up. Plain and simple. You're lucky – you get to stay young, while I keep getting older and older."

Nala laughed. "What are you talking about, Simba?"

Simba stared at her, a dead serious look in his eyes. "Don't you get it yet? First it starts with a little bit of red fur. I go to sleep, and I wake up a teenager. So what about the next time I go to sleep, Nala? I'll wake up older. Then the next morning, I'll be even *more* older. And the next, and the next, and the next, until all that's left of me is a rotting skeleton."

A look of horror slowly appeared on Nala's face, realising that what Simba was saying was true. It wasn't just going to stop with him becoming a teenager. It would get worse. The next day he might wake up as an adult. Then the next day he might wake up as an elderly lion. Then the day after that he might not wake up at all.

"I've only got a few days left at the most," Simba continued, as tears formed in his eyes. "Before I die."

"Don't say that," said Nala, giving him a reassuring smile. "We'll figure it out, Simba. Together. I promise."

Simba smiled. "Thanks, Nala. But... where would we start? I mean, it could be anything."

"It could be *anyone*," said Nala. "It might be a person. Another weirdo who wants to wreck your life just for fun. Hey – maybe it's your secret brother who's jealous of you being the Prince, so he's making you older so he can take over your life."

"Nah. I don't think my Mom had another cub. It has to be something else." His eyes suddenly lit up. "Maybe I'm allergic."

"Allergic to what?" asked Nala. "I've known you for ages and I've never seen you allergic to anything. You can't just become allergic at random, Simba."

"Maybe I'm just allergic to something I've never seen before," he suggested. "Like... a new kind of... bird or something."

"You don't sound very convincing," Nala told him.

"I know," Simba agreed. "But my mind is blank. I'm exhausted. I had a very busy day yesterday, saving you from the evil clutches of Tama."

"Oh, *now* you admit she's evil!" Nala exclaimed.

"I meant she *used* to be evil," Simba corrected himself. "I'm sure she's got a very bright future ahead of her."

"Ah..." Tama moaned, as she lay on her back in the middle of the jungle clearing, staring down at Tojo, who was massaging her hind paws. "Tojo, I know it was a long walk here, but you didn't need to go to all this trouble. It is... very... relaxing, though."

Tojo looked up from her paws and smiled at her. "I'll do anything for you, Tama. From now on, if you ask me to do something, then I'll do it. I want you to be the happiest cub alive."

Tama smiled back at him. "Thank you," she told him.

He really cared about her. Ever since Tojo had told her yesterday that he loved her, Tama hadn't let go of him since. She was a changed person. Evil was out, and good was in. She wasn't going to be mean to Tojo ever again. She'd hurt him a lot when they first met. That wasn't going to happen any more. They were going to love each other to the end.

"I can't believe out of all the places we could have gone to, you wanted to stay in the jungle," said Tojo.

"It's kind of nice around here," Tama replied, looking around. "It's huge, there's lots of things to do, and there's an endless supply of water. What more could you ever want?"

"So it looks like this is our new home," Tojo stated. "It's certainly a big step up from the Outlands."

"You can say that again." She smiled, and pointed to her left hind paw. "You missed a spot – just under the claws."

"Don't push your luck," Tojo joked, and they both started laughing.

"I had no idea you were in love with me," Tama told him. "Really. I never would have guessed."

Tojo shrugged. "I thought it was always kind of obvious, but then again, you were concentrating on a lot of your evil schemes back then."

"Well, that's all going to change now," Tama assured him. "No more evil. None at all. It's about time we started *helping* people, Tojo. I bet there's lots of problems in the jungle we can fix."

"Like if we find a bunch of baby birds and have to teach them to fly?" Tojo suggested. "Actually, that sounds pretty far-fetched."

"Anything. We'll become the heroes of the jungle." Tama grinned. "We can make a difference here. And then when we get older, we can start a family. We'll have loads of little Tamas and Tojos running around."

"Sounds good to me," said Tojo, as a grin spread across his face. "Very good..."

AN: Aww. Tojo and Tama have seriously fallen for each other, haven't they? Nice to see that they won't encounter any problems ever again... Or will they? And what about Simba? Will he just keep getting older and older? Will he *die*? Grr...

so many questions! But the answers are just a few chapters away. Until next time, dear readers!

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: It's Over and Done With

AN: I quite like this next chapter. Has a funny little quirk to it. You don't need me to spoil it, though, do you? See for yourself.

Chapter Five: It's Over and Done With

"I just don't understand it," Simba said, as he shifted back and forth to try and make himself comfortable. His whole body was aching. He assumed that it must have been growing pains or something. He figured that was what you got when you grew up *too* fast.

The sunlight that was beating down on him wasn't helping much, either. Nala had suggested that they sit by the water hole so they could try and figure this out together. But all Simba could think about was how hot it was... He was baking alive!

"I mean, why me?" Simba continued, in his new voice, which he had sadly become quickly accustomed to. He missed his old voice. But this was what he had to deal with for now. "How come it's me who has to suffer all the time?" He shot Nala a look. "Why couldn't it be *you*?"

"Hey!" Nala exclaimed. "I'm just trying to help you out, Simba. There's no need to say things like that."

"Oh, you know what I mean." Simba rolled his eyes. "It's just that this growing up thing is becoming... a problem. A *big* problem. So big that I just don't know what to do any more. It's got to be one of the toughest mysteries I've ever heard of!"

"Yeah..." Nala agreed, watching her shimmering reflection in the water hole. She took one look at Simba's reflection, and she found her eyes widening at how big he had become. He was about three times as big as her! "But we'll think of something. We always do. Won't we?"

Simba shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe I should just face facts and accept that I'll be dead in just a few days. It doesn't look like there's anything we can do about it."

"You know, you've become very lazy ever since you grew up," Nala commented. "The Simba I know wouldn't give up. He'd keep on thinking of ways to fix things. He'd fight for his youth! Come on, Simba – you need to think your way out of this. It can't be *that* hard. You've done it before."

"I just feel... tired," Simba told her, rolling over so he lay on his stomach. "Maybe I should just take a little nap to clear my head..." He closed his eyes, resting his head on his paws.

"You're just using that as an excuse!" Nala accused, taking a few steps towards him. "And besides, if you go to sleep now then you'll just waste the short time you have left!"

"Stop complaining, Nala," said Simba, opening his eyes. "I've got everything under control," he assured her.

"No, you haven't!" Nala shouted. "Simba, you've got to fix this before it's too late! If you don't, then you'll *die*!"

"Nala, for once in your life, just shut up!" Simba snapped. "Stop trying to control my life! Why don't you just leave me alone?"

Nala stared hard at him. "Simba, I'm trying to help—"

"I don't need your help!" Simba interrupted angrily. "I can figure this out all by myself. Just go away, Nala. You're too young to be hanging around me any more. Go find someone else to annoy."

Nala frowned, and felt her heart sink. "You've changed, Simba," she told him. "You're sounding like you don't even love me—"

"To be honest, Nala, I think it's over," Simba revealed, causing Nala to gasp. "I mean, think about it. I'm a teenager, and you're just a cub. It's never going to work. That's why you should go. There's no future for us any more."

"I think there is!" Nala cried, desperate to try and prevent this from happening. "And besides, you're not even a real teenager! You just *look* like one! You're still the same age! *I'm* older! You're just acting like a jerk!"

"I really don't have time for this," said Simba, as he closed his eyes. "Nala, nothing is going to change. I'm gonna grow older, while you'll stay the way you are. There is nothing left for our relationship. Fall in love with someone else."

"I don't *want* to, Simba!" Nala shouted. "It's only you! You're the only person I ever *could* love! No one else!" Tears streamed down her cheeks. "Just you..."

"Very touching, Nala," Simba remarked, not even listening to her. "Now, I'd like you to leave. I have more important things to catch up on – like sleep..."

Nala just stared at Simba. He was facing away from her, and all he seemed to care about was going to sleep. What a jerk!

Slowly, Nala walked over to Simba, and whispered in his ear. "You know, if the *real* Simba ever heard you say that, then he'd be ashamed of himself."

With that, Nala turned around and walked away. *If he wants my help, then he can forget it*, she thought, boiling with anger. How could he be so cruel to her like that? After everything she had done for him, he'd just thrown it all back in her face! It wasn't other people who were selfish – *Simba* was the selfish one! That stupid, arrogant, *horrible* teenager! She couldn't believe that was the same person she'd fallen in love with!

One thing was certain. Simba had changed. And it didn't look like he was going back to normal any time soon...

Stupid cub, Simba thought, letting his body relax so he could fall asleep. *She doesn't know anything. She doesn't understand. I've got responsibilities now! I can't spend all of my time running around after her! There's more important things to do!*

Slowly, Simba drifted off to sleep, thinking that he had everything under control. Thinking that he had it all planned out. Thinking that he'd finally become mature – what his parents had strived for him to be all his life. Now he would finally please them.

The only thing he *wasn't* thinking about was the most important thing of all...

"Hey!" the voice shouted. "Can't you see I'm talking to you over here? Are you deaf or something? Hey! I'm talking to you! Come on!"

Simba frowned. *Whoever that was, he wished they'd shut up! That high-pitched, squeaky, annoying voice grated on his nerves. If they spoke again then Simba was really going to make them wish they were sorry...*

"Hey!" the voice persisted. "I'm not gonna say this again! Open your eyes and speak to me!"

"Oh, just shut up!" Simba shouted, opening his eyes and rising to his paws. "Can't you see that I'm trying to get some sleep? While you're over there shouting like—" Simba gasped when he saw who was standing in front of him.

It was... himself. Only... it wasn't. He didn't look like Simba did right now, with a persisting problem with snoring and a growing mane. It looked just like he did when he was a cub. That golden-brown coat... that tuft of fur on top of his head... That was Simba, all right.

Simba was lost for words. "But... how...? I don't... Just what the heck is going on? Is this some kind of a trick or something?"

"It's a dream, you idiot," the cub Simba said.

"Don't call me stupid!" Simba snapped, instantly becoming angry. "Just who do you think you are?"

"I'm you, which means I'm allowed to make fun of myself," the cub Simba declared with a smile. "But if you still had a brain then you'd be able to figure that out. Right now you've made a big mess of things."

"What are you talking about?" Simba asked, turning away from the younger version of himself. "I don't have time for this."

The cub Simba suddenly appeared right in front of the real Simba, startling him. "Hey!" he exclaimed, backing away. "How did you do that?"

"It's a dream, stupid," replied the cub Simba. "Did you really forget that? You can do anything in a dream. Your mind has been seriously messed with, hasn't it?"

"Just what is the point of all this?" Simba snarled, a furious expression on his face. He didn't have time for these childish

games... "I've got important things to do."

"What, like sleeping?" said the cub Simba. "In other words, what you're doing right now. You've gotten really lazy, haven't you?"

"Just tell me why you're here," Simba ordered.

"Fine. I was actually just going to tell you. You see, you've become... a jerk, as I would put it. I'm the young part of you – the good part, actually. You think you've grown up, haven't you? Well, you haven't. You're still young. You should be me, but you're not. And it's up to you to find out why, and it's up to you to fix it. Understand?"

"You're crazy," Simba replied.

"Well, you would say that," said the cub Simba, rolling his eyes. "You've upset Nala, and that's something I'm really not very happy about. I'm trying to be very calm right now, but on the inside I'm madder than a stampeding wildebeest. I actually feel ashamed of myself. That's how bad you are."

"But she was... getting in the way," Simba muttered, as a frown began to spread across his face. "I didn't want her... bothering me."

"She was trying to help," said the cub Simba. "And you threw it in her face. You've really hurt her, and if you don't fix this then you're going to lose her for ever. Is that what you want?"

Simba thought for a moment. "No," he finally decided. "It's not. I didn't know what I was thinking. I was... confused." He looked into the cub Simba's eyes. "Tell me what to do."

"Do what Nala told you to – think," the cub Simba replied. "You can do that, right? If you can figure out who's done this, then everything from there will be easy. You'll get your youth back and everything will be happy again. Isn't that what you want?"

"I... I..." Simba couldn't find the right words.

"That's all I can say," the cub Simba told him. "Sorry. From now on, you're on your own."

"Wait!" Simba cried, as the cub Simba began to fade away. "Wait!"

Then everything flashed a bright white, and Simba was plunged into darkness.

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: Simba's the Mane Event

Chapter Six: Simba's the Mane Event

"No!" Simba cried, hopping to his paws. "I don't understand! What do I have to do? What do I...?" He narrowed his eyes, realising something. "Hey. My voice sounds deeper. Much deeper than before." He groaned and rolled his eyes. "What's happening now?" he exclaimed, as he collapsed to the ground, causing his big red mane to get in the way of his face. He brushed it aside, before his eyes widened in shock.

"Wait a minute..." Simba's eyes darted left and right, and he let out a cry of surprise when he saw he now had a full mane. "I... I'm an adult!" he cried, looking his whole body over. He'd gotten even bigger!

Simba hurried over to the water hole, staring at his reflection. "So..." he said, studying his own face. "This is what I'll look like. Well, it's what I *do* look like. At least I don't look like my Dad... Well, I have his mane, but those are *definitely* my Mom's eyes." A flicker of a smile appeared on his face. "It's okay," he decided. "I guess."

He turned away from the water hole, a thoughtful look on his face. "Okay. No more getting sidetracked," he decided. "I'm not a teenager any more. No more of that emotional stuff. Which is good, because now I can concentrate on fixing this. I'll do whatever it takes to be young again."

Simba took a few steps forward, and looked around. It was quiet around the water hole today. Either everyone was busy with something, or Simba was just scaring people away. He couldn't exactly blame them. After all, he was the only person who could make himself older just by going to sleep.

"Sleep..." Simba said, closing his eyes, thinking hard. "Sleep..." His eyes snapped open. "Sleep! That's it!" He started pacing back and forth. "Every time I go to sleep, I grow up! It's not every day – it's every time I fall asleep! So, if I don't want to grow up, I should just avoid sleeping!"

Simba then opened his mouth and let out a yawn. "But I feel so tired..." he muttered, rubbing the top of his head with a paw. "I feel like I'm being *forced* to go to sleep!"

Simba blinked a few times, and felt himself sink to the ground, like his own body was dragging him down, making him surrender to sleep. "No!" he cried, defiantly rising to his paws. "I'm not going to sleep! Not until this is put right!"

He hopped from left to right, trying to stay awake. "Okay, okay, so now I just need to find out *who's* done this to me." Simba tried to think, but just couldn't. This was too confusing... "I need help," he told himself. "But from who? I can't go to Nala. She hates me now! Oh, why did I have to be so mean to her? I'm such an idiot!"

And then, something rather crazy popped into Simba's mind. "Maybe there's someone *else* who can help me with my problem." A smile spread across Simba's face. "Tama. She knows magic. Maybe *she* knows what's going on – she might even know how to reverse it!"

Simba started sprinting, his big, strong legs carrying him forward with ease. "Wait a minute." He skidded to a halt. "Where would I find her? I don't know where she went!" He could feel himself getting tired again, so he just decided to take a risk. "I'll try the jungle! She can't have got much further than that in one night!"

Simba started running again, trying as hard as he could to ignore how tired he was. He wanted to go to sleep so badly, but he knew that if he did, then he would regret it. The next time he woke up, he knew that he wouldn't have any strength left at all.

Because he knew he'd be dead.

"Nala, honey, I think he's just confused," Sarafina told her daughter, after Nala had woken her up and explained to her the whole story about Simba and how he kept on ageing with each passing moment. "Wouldn't you feel the same if that happened to *you*?"

"No!" Nala exclaimed, still sounding angry with Simba for what he'd done to her. "He told me to stop hanging around him! He told me to shut up! I wouldn't do that! I'm a very sweet girl... when I choose to be."

"What trouble has that uncivilised cub gotten himself into this time?" asked Zazu, as he opened one eye, suddenly awake at the mention of Simba. He was perched on top of a small rock in the corner of the den, next to where Sarafina lay.

"Zazu, I thought you were asleep," said Nala.

"I *was* asleep, until someone mentioned the Prince of Darkness," Zazu remarked.

"I told you, Zazu, you really don't have to guard me," Sarafina told him. "I feel perfectly all right now."

"The Queen insisted," replied Zazu. "And if I don't, then the King is legally obliged to sentence me to my death – by painful digestion, no less. I hear vultures don't take kindly to little birds like me wandering around on their land. Still, it's better than having to look after Simba and Nala. I'd much rather guard a grown-up lioness than run around after two pesky cubs all day. Reminds me of a sea crab I once met. He always seemed to have the same problem..."

"I think you'll find Simba's matured a bit," said Nala in an evidently angry tone. "Quite literally, if you ask me."

"Young Nala, what in heavens' name are you talking about?" Zazu asked.

"Simba's grown up. A lot. He went to sleep a cub, and then the next morning he woke up a teenager," Nala explained. "And now he doesn't even like me any more."

"Well, it's about time you two split up," said Zazu. "You cause far too much trouble when you're together. I think that it's a good... thing..." Zazu trailed off when he saw the angry glare Nala was giving him. "I'll be quiet from now on."

"I'm sure he'll come to his senses," Sarafina assured her cub. "When has Simba ever let you down before?"

"It doesn't even sound like Simba any more," Nala told her mother. "He thinks he's all grown-up and mature now. He's changed."

"Simba? Grown-up and mature?" Zazu couldn't help but laugh. "That'll be the day. Before I know it you'll be telling me he's a fully-grown adult lion with a huge red mane!"

Still a fully-grown adult lion with a huge red mane, Simba's paws pounded the rocky ground of the flatlands, as he concentrated on reaching the jungle. He was thinking about everything and anything just to take his mind off of how tired he was. If he stopped for so much as a second, then he knew he was done for. He had to keep moving. Otherwise, he would collapse to the ground, and wouldn't ever get up again.

I've gotta reach the jungle, Simba thought, breathing heavily. *I've gotta reach the jungle. Gotta find Tama. Gotta find Tama...*

She really was Simba's only hope. Since she knew all about magic – having come from a magical family – he figured that Tama might know what was causing him to age so rapidly. What would *really* make his day was if she could somehow prevent it from happening. He wanted to go back to being a cub again. He didn't want to be an adult. If he stayed this way, then his whole life was practically over – even though he'd hardly begun to live!

Simba could see the familiar green outline of the jungle in the distance. *Not that far to go now*, he thought, as a smile appeared on his face. *Come on, Simba! You're nearly there! It's just a few more—*

Suddenly, Simba's leg tripped over a large rock, and he skidded across the ground, finally coming to a halt a few moments later in a small cloud of dust.

Simba's eyes were half-closed. He felt exhausted, and in pain. Slowly, he tried to get up, but he just didn't have the strength. He was too tired. He needed to sleep. *Now.*

He could feel the intense heat from the sun burning him. Every tiny part of his huge body was telling him to go to sleep.

Simba could do nothing more. He closed his eyes, and slowly drifted off to sleep, knowing full well that he wasn't going to wake up again...

AN: I quite liked that dream sequence. It's funny seeing Simba talking to... well, Simba. Adds to how weird I am, really, doesn't it? But whatever, I can tell you're enjoying this. I also know that Simba isn't enjoying it. Will he ever wake up again? Will Nala ever love Simba again? Just who the heck was that sea crab Zazu was talking about? All shall be revealed tomorrow – apart from that last question, of course. Toodles!

***Chapter 7*: Chapter 7: Old, Pathetic and Weak**

AN: Time to end this thing. Will Simba regain his youth, or will he grow old and die?

Chapter Seven: Old, Pathetic and Weak

When Simba awoke, he felt exhausted. The sleep hadn't helped at all – which he knew would happen – and now he just felt worse. Much worse than being a teenager or an adult. He felt... weak. Like he didn't have the strength to go on. Simba could have died there and then, but he knew he had a job to do.

I've got to... get up, he thought wearily, as his eyes flickered open. Looking ahead, he could see the jungle. It wasn't too far from where he lay right now. Simba turned his head to the side, and his eyes widened in fear.

Buzzards were closing in on him, ready to peck him apart. They thought he was dead! *Oh, no*, Simba thought worriedly, as he strained to get to his paws. His body felt so heavy and powerless now. All his strength was gone. *I can't... let them... eat me.*

Simba tried to take a step forward, but he collapsed to the ground again. *I can't walk... I'm far too weak... But I need to... get to the jungle... before it's... too late.*

Slowly, Simba started crawling away, far too weak to walk, let alone run. He had to get to the jungle. He'd be safe there. He'd be in the shade, away from harm. And maybe he could find Tama, and have this all reversed. Simba's life was nothing right now. All he wanted was to go back to being a cub. From what he'd seen, Simba never ever wanted to grow up. *Ever!*

He crawled and crawled, using what little energy remained in his body. He had become exhausted and dehydrated, thanks to him falling asleep in the middle of the boiling hot flatlands. But there was something else holding him back. Something he... couldn't quite understand. He felt like he'd changed – more so than he had already.

Simba ignored the squawking protests from the buzzards as he crawled along. He looked up to see they were circling over him. They thought he was done for. As soon as he closed his eyes, he would soon become their dinner. They would feast on his rotting, lifeless corpse.

That wasn't going to happen. He had too much to live for. Even if it didn't seem like it right now. *Come on*, Simba urged himself, trying to speed up his crawling. But that only managed to make him feel even more tired. *You can do it. Just a little further.*

After what seemed like for ever, Simba finally collapsed to the ground under a short tree. The shade felt good. Especially after spending so long out in the hot sun. Needless to say, he still felt hot. And very ill.

His heart was pounding in his chest. Simba coughed a few times, and frowned. *Just crawling makes me feel sick*, he thought. *I feel like nothing. Why do I feel so... worthless?*

Simba turned his head to the side, and spotted a little pool of water, not too far away from the tree he lay under. *Water... I need water.*

Slowly, Simba crawled over to the pool of water, and took a drink from it. The refreshing coolness of the water took away the dryness of his mouth. He felt so weak...

Simba stared at his reflection in the pool, and his eyes widened in horror. *Oh, no*, he thought, hoping he was just hallucinating because of the intense heat. *Oh, no. I don't believe this!*

Simba had grown up even more. His face had become wrinkled and fraught with age. His auburn eyes had become dull, grey and lifeless. Even his bright red mane had lost some of its colour. He was an old lion. A *dying* lion. "This can't be true!" Simba cried, his voice sounding ancient now. "It's impossible! I don't even look like *me* any more!"

He coughed again. It hurt his throat to talk. His voice was raspy and scratchy, having lost all traces of the cheerful voice Simba had when he was a cub. If this was who he was going to grow up to be, then Simba was terrified. Terrified of his future.

"Tama..." he muttered, pushing himself ever so slowly to his paws. "I have to find..." He coughed. "Tama."

Simba stumbled about the ground, trying to concentrate on walking. His vision felt blurry and unfocused. Thanks to his

incredibly old age, Simba had lost most of his sight. His whole world had become distorted.

His life had been ruined.

But, if he was very, very lucky, then he might just be able to fix all of that.

"... And that's why I have a very squeaky voice," Tojo finished, causing Tama to giggle in response.

"What a story, Tojo," said Tama, smiling as she snuggled up to him. The two were sat together in the middle of the jungle clearing – which was now their new 'official' home – just talking about everything and anything. "But I like your voice," she told him. "It just adds to your cuteness."

"What, along with my tiny size, underdeveloped claws and just all around nerdy personality?" he said with a chuckle. "You sure you picked the right person to fall in love with?"

Tama gave him a warm smile. "I wouldn't pick anyone else," she replied, resting her head on his chest. "You're kind, you're caring, and you're the nicest guy I've ever met." She stared at the three claw marks on his cheek, and frowned, sad memories returning to her. "I really am sorry about what I did to you."

Tojo pointed to the scars. "What, this? Don't worry about it. I already said that I forgive you. Besides, they'll heal, sooner or later."

"But I really am," Tama insisted. "I shouldn't have hurt you like that. After all, you never hurt *me*. It was wrong. But I've changed now, and I'll never do anything like that to you ever again."

"I didn't think you would anyway," said Tojo, putting a paw around her. "I love you, Tama. And you love me. As long as we're together, we'll be happy. No one will be able to bother us."

Thump! The sound of something – or *someone* – hitting the ground was heard. Turning their head to the side, Tojo and Tama saw an elderly, frail lion on the ground, his eyes closed. He practically looked *dead*.

"Oh, my gosh!" Tama exclaimed, hopping to her paws and running over to the lion. "What happened to him?"

Tojo joined Tama by her side, looking down at the old lion. "He looks so sad," Tojo noticed, viewing the lion with sympathy. Poor thing. The guy was most likely days away from the end of his life. "What would an old lion be doing hanging around in the middle of the jungle?"

"I don't know, but we've gotta help him," Tama replied. She prodded the lion gently. "Hello? Can you hear me?" The lion groaned, rolling onto his back. "He's still alive!"

The lion's dull, grey eyes flickered open. He brushed aside his slightly discoloured red mane from his face, looking up at Tama and Tojo. "It's... It's you..." he muttered, in an old voice. "Tama..."

Tama was slightly taken aback by the mention of her name. "How do you know my name?" she asked the lion. "Who are you?"

The lion coughed a few times. "Simba..." he told her.

Tama's eyes widened. "Simba? There's only one person I know with that name, and he looks nothing like you."

"It's... me..." he said. "Something... wrong... Grew... up..."

"Grew up?" Tojo exclaimed. "What does he mean by that?"

"Oh, dear," said Tama, nibbling on one of her claws, a nervous look on her face. "I think I know what's happened."

"What?" Tojo asked.

"That *is* Simba," Tama said, pointing to the old, weak lion in front of them. "But he's grown up."

"But... how is that possible?" said Tojo, not getting this at all. "No one just grows up over the course of one day! It's illogical!"

"He's been magically altered," Tama explained. "I can smell it."

"By you?" Tojo presumed.

Tama shot him a look. "No. It wasn't me. I thought you trusted me, Tojo. I'd never do anything like this. Well, I wouldn't *now*. Someone else did this to Simba. But I have no idea who."

"Help... me..." Simba pleaded, looking so vulnerable. "Please..."

"You can help him. *Can't* you?" asked Tojo.

"Uh... I... I don't know," Tama replied truthfully. "I've never seen anything like this before. And my powers are far from the best, so I might just end up making things even worse!"

"You've got to *try*," Tojo told her. "Just look how weak he is. He can't even stand up!"

"Okay, okay, I'll try." Tama looked at Simba, giving him one of her sweetest smiles. "It's all gonna be okay, Simba. Just you wait and see."

"What are you going to do?" Tojo asked.

"Try and control his age," Tama explained. "I'm going to try and make him young again. I don't know if it'll work, though." She took a deep breath, preparing herself. "Okay. Here goes nothing."

Tama put a paw on top of Simba's head, and he instantly closed his eyes, unconscious. A few seconds passed, and...

Simba's eyes snapped open, and he sat bolt upright, letting out a loud gasp! Tama and Tojo yelled in surprise, backing away.

Simba then collapsed to the ground, a totally lifeless look in his eyes.

"What did you do?" said Tojo, staring wide-eyed at Simba's body.

Tama gulped nervously. "I've killed him," she revealed. "I made him even older, and now he's dead."

Tojo gasped in horror. "But you—"

"Don't worry about it. I'll just try and make him younger." Tama put a paw back on top of Simba's head, and slowly, he started breathing again. "There we go. He's gone back to being old. It's better than being dead, that's for sure."

Simba's eyes were still wide open, and he looked like he was in some kind of trance.

"But that's not helping much," said Tojo, frowning. "You've got to change him back into a cub again."

"Hey, I've never done this before. Give me a break." Tama closed her eyes, and tried to concentrate. "Come on, Simba. You're young... You're young..."

Simba began to change. The colour returned to his mane, and his eyes changed from a dull, grey colour to a bright auburn colour. The wrinkles in his face disappeared, and he looked like an adult again.

"He looks younger," Tojo observed. "But not by a whole lot."

"I'm doing my best." Tama closed her eyes again, and concentrated even harder. "Be young, Simba! Now!"

Whoosh! A loud sound was heard, and Tojo closed his eyes, falling onto his back. "Whoa!" he exclaimed. "What was that?"

Tama opened her eyes, and looked down. A nervous smile spread across her face. "Um... I think you'd better see for yourself."

Tojo opened his eyes, getting to his paws. He walked over to where Simba was, and gasped. "What the...?"

Simba was curled up on the ground in a tiny ball, now a baby. A cute little baby. He sucked on one of his tiny paws as he slept, a little smile on his face.

"Aw..." Tama smiled. "Isn't that cute?"

"Tama, this is no time to admire how cute he is. You've got to return him to normal," Tojo reminded her.

"Yeah, yeah, okay. I was just saying, that's all." Tama placed her paw on little baby Simba's head, and closed her eyes once more. "Come on... This time you *have* to be a cub. You *have* to be."

Suddenly, Tama and Tojo heard a strange sound. *Pop!*

Looking down, the two cubs saw that Simba had completely disappeared. "Um... where did he go?" Tojo asked.

Tama scratched her head. "Um... I think I've made him go back to before he was even born."

King Mufasa and Queen Sarabi was standing on the edge of Pride Rock, overlooking their kingdom.

Suddenly, Sarabi felt a strange sensation. "Um, Mufasa?" she said, looking down at her stomach. "I seem to be suddenly pregnant."

"Excuse me?"

Whoosh! Tama and Tojo jumped back in surprise as Simba appeared in front of them again. "There we go," said Tama, smiling. "I finally got it right."

Simba lay on his back, looking like a normal cub again. He snored lightly in his sleep, a smile on his face.

"Good job," said Tojo, looking Simba over. "I got worried for a second there when he disappeared. I thought he wasn't going to come back."

"You can always rely on me," said Tama, grinning. "Hey, this hero thing isn't so bad after all!"

"What if he's hurt?" Nala asked her mother, worried. "I just left him out there on his own! He could be dying right now!"

"I thought you didn't care about Simba any more?" said Sarafina, pretending to look confused. On the inside, she was laughing. She knew how much her daughter loved Simba. This reaction was inevitable.

"Mom, have you lost your mind? I *love* Simba! Oh, I was such a jerk to leave him out there! I can't really blame him for feeling depressed," said Nala.

"I'm sure the young master will be fine," Zazu told her. "He always is. Even when he's on the brink of death itself. He really should learn to be more like me."

"Yeah. Like that'd ever happen," said a voice from behind Nala.

Nala turned around, and her eyes lit up when she saw Simba standing there, back to his old self. He was a cub again.

"Simba!" she cried, racing towards him and giving him a big hug. "You're a cub again!"

Simba chuckled, hugging her back. "Yeah. No more growing up for me. Not for a long time. And Nala..." Simba gave her an apologetic look. "I'm sorry for what I said to you. I was just being... stupid. Really, really stupid. I didn't mean a word of it."

"It's okay, Simba," she assured him. "I'm just happy to have you back again." She gave him a kiss on the muzzle, and Simba blushed in response.

"Ah... young love," said Sarafina, watching the two cubs. "It's so romantic."

Zazu frowned and shook his head. "It's so immature."

The End

AN: So, kids, did you enjoy that? Simba's back to normal, and he'll never grow up ever again. No. Seriously. Have you ever tired writing about Simba as an adult? It's boring! Much better when he's a cub. Don't you think so? Anyway, see you next time!

NEXT TIME: Nala is kidnapped by a flirtatious cub called Prince Haiba, and is forced into marrying him. Will she say yes?